The Social Bridging Project

Listos California’s Social Bridging Project connects the most vulnerable Californians with knowledge and resources on COVID-19 and natural disasters

This spring, Listos California launched the Social Bridging Project, a pioneering public health and safety initiative featuring one-on-one communication with Californians at risk from COVID-19 and natural disasters. (Listos means “ready” in Spanish.) Anchored at the Governor’s Office of Emergency Services, Listos California uses tools and technology usually reserved for voter engagement to counter social distancing through direct phone calls to people at risk. These include older adults, people with socioeconomic vulnerabilities and residents of areas prone to wildfires and other disasters. More than 10,000 Californians have had meaningful conversations with callers, known as Bridgers, during the first phase of the project.

Wellness Checks
Prolonged isolation and social distancing pose grave threats to the physical and emotional well-being of older Californians. The National Academy of Sciences reports that social isolation and loneliness can cause premature death, comparable to other risk factors such as high blood pressure, smoking and obesity.

Bridgers, who primarily hail from AmeriCorps NCCC and Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT), are trained to check on older adults who have spent many months of the pandemic isolated at home or in senior facilities. They are part of Governor Newsom’s “Stay Home. Save Lives. Check In.” initiative.

Through these wellness checks, Bridgers refer older adults to state and local resources that address food insecurity, housing insecurity, healthcare, mental health and other concerns related to the COVID-19 crisis. They also connect on a personal level. Many older adults simply enjoy the opportunity to have a caring conversation.

Disaster Readiness
In addition to its COVID-19 outreach, the project expanded in July 2020 to include calls that help Californians prepare for wildfires and other natural disasters. Bridgers from AmeriCorps NCCC and CERT are sharing information with California adults of all ages on how to receive emergency alerts, how to prepare for an evacuation and how to shelter in place.

Bridgers offer every call recipient the Listos California Disaster Ready Guide, available in seven languages, with low- to no-cost tips and tools that establish a baseline of preparedness for all. This summer and fall, the Social Bridging Project will also conduct personalized, targeted outreach to monolingual Spanish speakers and other highly vulnerable communities that lack access to information on COVID-19 and disaster preparation.

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